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City Document—No. 37.

REPORT
OF
THE TRUSTEES
OF THE
PUBLIC LIBRARY
OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON

JULY, 1852.



BOSTON:
1852.

J. H. EASTBURN, CITY PRINTER.

CITY OF BOSTON.

In Board of Mayor and Aldermen, June 30, 1852.

Ordered, That the Trustees of the City Library be requested to report to the City Council upon the objects to be attained by the establishment of a Public Library, and the best mode of effecting them; and that they be authorized to report in print.

Passed. Sent down for concurrence.

BENJAMIN SEAVER, *Mayor.*

In Common Council, July 1, 1852.

Concurred.

HENRY J. GARDNER, *President.*

A true copy. Attest:

S. F. McCLEARY, JR., *City Clerk.*

REPORT.

The Trustees of the public library, in compliance with the order of the two branches of the City Council, submit the following report on the objects to be attained by the establishment of a public library and the best mode of effecting them :—

Of all human arts that of writing, as it was one of the earliest invented, is also one of the most important. Perhaps it would be safe to pronounce it, without exception the most useful and important. It is the great medium of communication between mind and mind, as respects different individuals, countries, and periods of time. We know from history that only those portions of the human family have made any considerable and permanent progress in civilization, which have possessed and used this great instrument of improvement.

It is principally in the form of books that the art of writing, though useful in many other ways, has exerted its influence on human progress. It is almost exclusively by books that a permanent record has been made of word and deed, of thought and feeling; that history, philosophy and poetry, that literature and science in their full comprehension, have been called into being, by the co-operation of intellects acting in concert with each

other, though living in different countries and at different periods, and often using different languages.

Till the middle of the fifteenth century of our era, it was literally the *art of writing* by which these effects were produced. No means of multiplying books was known but the tedious process of transcription. This of course rendered them comparatively scarce and dear, and thus greatly limited their usefulness. It was a chief cause also of the loss of some of the most valuable literary productions. However much this loss may be regretted, we cannot but reflect with wonder and gratitude on the number of invaluable works which have been handed down to us from antiquity, notwithstanding the cost and labor attending their multiplication.

The same cause would necessarily operate to some extent against the formation of public and private libraries. Still however, valuable collections of books were made in all the cultivated states of antiquity, both by governments and individuals. The library formed by the Ptolemies at Alexandria in Egypt was probably the direct means by which the most valuable works of ancient literature have been preserved to us. At a later period, the collections of books in the religious houses contributed efficaciously toward the same end.

The invention of printing in the fifteenth century increased the efficiency of the art of writing, as the chief instrument of improvement, beyond all former example or conception. It became more than ever the great medium of communication and transmission. It immediately began to operate, in a thousand ways and with a power which it would be impossible to overstate, in producing the great intellectual revival of the modern world. One of the most obvious effects of the newly invented art was of course greatly to facilitate the formation of libraries.

An astonishing degree of excellence in the art of printing was reached at once. The typography of the first edition of the whole Bible is nearly equal to that of any subsequent edition. But the farther improvements which have taken place in four hundred years in cutting and casting types and solid pages, in the construction of presses and their movement by water, steam, and other power, in the manufacture of paper, and in the materials and mode of binding, have perhaps done as much to make books cheap and consequently abundant, as the art of printing as originally invented.

It is scarcely necessary to add that these causes have led to a great multiplication of libraries in Europe and America. In nearly all the capitals of Europe large collections of books have been made and supported at the public expense. They form a part of the apparatus of all the higher institutions for education, and latterly of many schools; they are found in most scientific and literary societies; and they are possessed by innumerable individuals in all countries.

In proportion as books have become more abundant, they have become the principal instrument of instruction in places of education. It may be doubted whether their employment for this purpose is not, particularly in this country, carried too far. The organization of modern schools, in which very large numbers of pupils are taught by a small number of instructors, tends to make the use of books, rather than the living voice of the teacher, the main dependence. Still however, this is but an abuse of that which in itself is not only useful but indispensable; and no one can doubt that books will ever continue to be, as they now are, the great vehicle of imparting and acquiring knowledge and carrying on the work of education. As far as instruction is concerned, it will no doubt ever continue to be, as it now is, the work of the

teacher to direct, encourage, and aid the learner in the use of his books.

In this respect the system of public education in Boston may probably sustain a comparison with any in the world. Without asserting that the schools are perfect, it may truly be said that the general principle and plan on which they are founded, are as nearly so as the nature of the case admits. They compose a great system of instruction, administered in schools rising in gradation from the most elementary to those of a highly advanced character, open to the whole population, and supported by a most liberal public expenditure. The schools themselves may admit improvement, and the utmost care should be taken, that they keep pace with the progress of improvement in other things; but the system itself, in the great features just indicated, seems perfect; that is, in a word, to give a first rate school education, at the public expense, to the entire rising generation.

But when this object is attained, and it is certainly one of the highest importance, our system of public instruction stops. Although the school and even the college and the university are, as all thoughtful persons are well aware, but the first stages in education, the public makes no provision for carrying on the great work. It imparts, with a noble equality of privilege, a knowledge of the elements of learning to all its children, but it affords them no aid in going beyond the elements. It awakens a taste for reading, but it furnishes to the public nothing to be read. It conducts our young men and women to that point, where they are qualified to acquire from books the various knowledge in the arts and sciences which books contain; but it does nothing to put those books within their reach. As matters now stand, and speaking with general reference to the mass of the community, the public makes no provision whatever, by

which the hundreds of young persons annually educated, as far as the elements of learning are concerned, at the public expense, can carry on their education and bring it to practical results by private study.

We do not wish to exaggerate in either part of this statement, although we wish to call attention to the point as one of great importance and not yet, as we think, enough considered. We are far from intimating that school education is not important because it is elementary ; it is, on the contrary, of the utmost value. Neither do we say, on the other hand, because there are no libraries which in the strict sense of the word are public, that therefore there is absolutely no way by which persons of limited means can get access to books. There are several libraries of the kind usually called public, belonging however to private corporations ; and there are numerous private libraries from which books are liberally loaned to those wishing to borrow them.

It will however be readily conceded that this falls far short of the aid and encouragement which would be afforded to the reading community, (in which we include all persons desirous of obtaining knowledge or an agreeable employment of their time from the perusal of books), by a well supplied public library. If we had no free schools, we should not be a community without education. Large numbers of children would be educated at private schools at the expense of parents able to afford it, and considerable numbers in narrow circumstances would, by the aid of the affluent and liberal, obtain the same advantages. We all feel however that such a state of things would be a poor substitute for our system of public schools, of which it is the best feature that it is a public provision for all ; affording equal advantages to poor and rich ; furnishing at the public expense an edu-

cation so good, as to make it an object with all classes to send their children to the public schools.

It needs no argument to prove that, in a republican government, these are features of the system, quite as valuable as the direct benefit of the instruction which it imparts. But it is plain that the same principles apply to the farther progress of education, in which each one must be mainly his own teacher. Why should not this prosperous and liberal city extend some reasonable amount of aid to the foundation and support of a noble public library, to which the young people of both sexes, when they leave the schools, can resort for those works which pertain to general culture, or which are needful for research into any branch of useful knowledge? At present, if the young machinist, engineer, architect, chemist, engraver, painter, instrument-maker, musician (or student of any branch of science or literature,) wishes to consult a valuable and especially a rare and costly work, he must buy it, often import it at an expense he can ill afford, or he must be indebted for its use to the liberality of private corporations or individuals. The trustees submit, that all the reasons which exist for furnishing the means of elementary education, at the public expense, apply in an equal degree to a reasonable provision to aid and encourage the acquisition of the knowledge required to complete a preparation for active life or to perform its duties.

We are aware that it may be said and truly, that knowledge acquired under hardships is often more thorough, than that to which the learner is invited without effort on his part; that the studious young man who makes sacrifices and resorts to expedients to get books, values them the more and reads them to greater profit. This however is equally true of school education and of every other privilege in life. But the city of Boston

has never deemed this a reason for withholding the most munificent appropriations for the public education. It has not forborne to support an expensive system of free schools, because without such a system a few individuals would have acquired an education for themselves, under every possible discouragement and disadvantage, and because knowledge so acquired is usually thorough, well-digested and available, beyond what is got in an easier way. The question is not what will be brought about by a few individuals of indomitable will and an ardent thirst for improvement, but what is most for the advantage of the mass of the community. In this point of view we consider that a large public library is of the utmost importance as the means of completing our system of public education.

There is another point of view in which the subject may be regarded,—a point of view, we mean, in which a free public library is not only seen to be demanded by the wants of the city at this time, but also seen to be the next natural step to be taken for the intellectual advancement of this whole community and for which this whole community is peculiarly fitted and prepared.

Libraries were originally intended for only a very small portion of the community in which they were established, because few persons could read, and fewer still desired to make inquiries that involved the consultation of many books. Even for a long time after the invention of printing, they were anxiously shut up from general use; and, down to the present day, a large proportion of the best libraries in the world forbid anything like a free circulation of their books;—many of them forbidding any circulation at all.

For all this, there were at first, good reasons, and for some of it good reasons exist still. When only manuscripts were known, those in public libraries were, no

in a manner to be the reason himself, which is usually accepted if, though not agreeable with him in its practicality as a circulation

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doubt, generally too precious to be trusted from their usual places of deposit; and the most remarkable, if not the most valuable, of all such collections now in existence—the Laurentian in Florence—still retains, and perhaps wisely, its eight or nine thousand manuscripts chained to the desks on which they lie. So too, when printed books first began to take the place of manuscripts, the editions of them were small and their circulation limited. When, therefore, copies of such books now occur, they are often regarded rightfully as hardly less curious and valuable than manuscripts, and as demanding hardly less care in their preservation. And finally, even of books more recently published, some,—like Dictionaries and Cyclopædias,—are not intended for circulation by means of public libraries, and others are too large, too costly, or otherwise too important to be trusted abroad, except in rare cases.

But while there are some classes of books that should be kept within the precincts of a public library, there are others to which as wide a circulation as possible should be given; books which, in fact, are especially intended for it, and the end of whose existence is defeated, just in proportion as they are shut up and restrained from general use. It was, however, long after this class was known, before it became a large one, and still longer before means were found fitted to give to the community a tolerably free use of it. At first it consisted almost exclusively of practical, religious books. Gradually the more popular forms of history, books of travel, and books chiefly or entirely intended for entertainment followed. At last, these books became so numerous, and were in such demand, that the larger public libraries,—most of which had grown more or less out of the religious establishments of the middle ages, and had always regarded with little interest this more popular literature,—could

not, it was plain, continue to be looked upon as the only or as the chief resource for those who were unable to buy for themselves the reading they wanted. Other resources and other modes of supply have, therefore, been at different times devised.

The first, as might naturally have been anticipated, was suggested by the personal interest of a sagacious individual. Allan Ramsay, who, after being bred a wig-maker, had become a poet of the people, and set up a small bookseller's shop, was led to eke out an income, too inconsiderable for the wants of his family, by lending his books on hire to those who were not able or not willing to buy them of him. This is the oldest of all the numberless "Circulating Libraries;" and it sprang up naturally in Edinburg, where in proportion to the population, it is believed there were then more readers than there were in any other city in the world. This was in 1725; and, twenty years ago, the same establishment was not only in existence—as it probably is still—but it was the largest and best of its class in all Scotland. The example was speedily followed. Such libraries were set up everywhere, or almost everywhere in Christendom, but especially in Germany and in Great Britain, where they are thus far more numerous than they are in any other countries; the most important being now in London, where (for at least one of them) from fifty to two hundred copies of every good new work, are purchased in order to satisfy the demands of its multitudinous subscribers and patrons.

All "Circulating Libraries," technically so called, are however, to be regarded as adventures and speculations for private profit. On this account, they were early felt to be somewhat unsatisfactory in their very nature, and other libraries were contrived that were founded on the more generous principle of a mutual and common inter-

est in those who wished to use the books they contained. This principle had, in fact, been recognized somewhat earlier than the time of Allan Ramsay, but for very limited purposes and not at all for the *circulation* of books. Thus the lawyers of Edinburg, London, and Paris, respectively had already been associated together for the purpose of collecting *consulting* Law Libraries for their own use, and so it is believed, had some other bodies, which had collected consulting libraries for their own exclusive especial purposes. But the first *Social Library* of common or popular books for popular use, in the sense we now give the appellation, was probably that of the "Library Company," as it was called, in Philadelphia, founded at the suggestion of Dr. Franklin in 1731, by the young mechanics of that city, where he was then a young printer. The idea was no doubt a fortunate one; particularly characteristic of Franklin's shrewd good sense, and adapted to the practical wants of our own country. The library of these young men, therefore, succeeded and was imitated in other places. Even before the Revolutionary war, such libraries were established elsewhere in the colonies, and, after its conclusion, many sprang up on all sides. New England, in this way, has come to possess a great number of them, and especially Massachusetts; two-thirds of whose towns are said at this time, to possess "Social Libraries," each owned by a moderate number of proprietors.

That these popular "Social Libraries" have done great good, and that many of them are still doing great good, cannot be reasonably doubted. But many of them,—perhaps the majority in this Commonwealth,—are now languishing. For this, there are two reasons. In the first place, such libraries are accessible only to their proprietors, who are not always the persons most anxious to use them, or, in some cases, but not many, they are

accessible to other persons on payment of a small sum for each book borrowed. And, in the second place, they rarely contain more than one copy of a book, so that if it be a new book, or one in much demand, many are obliged to wait too long for their turn to read it; so long that their desire for the book is lost, and their interest in the library diminished. Efforts, therefore, have been for some time making, to remedy these deficiencies, and to render books of different kinds more accessible to all, whether they can pay for them or hire them, or not.

Thus, within thirty years, Sunday School Libraries have been everywhere established; but their influence—great and valuable as it is—does not extend much beyond the youngest portions of society and their particular religious teachers. And, within a shorter period than thirty years, District or Public School Libraries have been scattered all over the great State of New York, and all over New England, in such abundance, that five years ago, (1847) the aggregate number of their books in the State of New York was above a million three hundred thousand volumes, and fast increasing; but neither do these school libraries generally contain more than one copy of any one book, nor is their character often such as to reach and satisfy the mass of adult readers.

Strong intimations, therefore, are already given, that ampler means and means better adapted to our peculiar condition and wants, are demanded, in order to diffuse through our society that knowledge without which we have no right to hope, that the condition of those who are to come after us will be as happy and prosperous as our own. The old roads, so to speak, are admitted to be no longer sufficient. Even the more modern turnpikes do not satisfy our wants. We ask for rail-cars and steam-boats, in which many more persons—even multitudes—may advance together to the great end of life, and go

faster, farther and better, by the means thus furnished to them, than they have ever been able to do before.

Nowhere are the intimations of this demand more decisive than in our own city, nor, it is believed, is there any city of equal size in the world, where added means for general popular instruction and self-culture,—if wisely adapted to their great ends,—will be so promptly seized upon or so effectually used, as they will be here. One plain proof of this is, the large number of good libraries we already possess, which are constantly resorted to by those who have the right, and which yet—it is well known,—fail to supply the demand for popular reading. For we have respectable libraries of almost every class, beginning with those of the Athenæum, of the American Academy, of the Historical Society, and of the General Court,—the Social Library of 1792, the Mercantile Library, the Mechanics Apprentices' Library, the Libraries of the Natural History Society, of the Bar, of the Statistical Association, of the Genealogical Society, of the Medical Society, and of other collective and corporate bodies; and coming down to the "Circulating Libraries" strictly so called; the Sunday School Libraries, and the collections of children's books found occasionally in our Primary Schools. Now all these are important and excellent means for the diffusion of knowledge. They are felt to be such, and they are used as such, and the trustees would be especially careful not to diminish the resources or the influence of any one of them. They are sure that no public library can do it. But it is admitted,—or else another and more general library would not now be urged,—that these valuable libraries do not, either individually or in the aggregate, reach the great want of this city, considered as a body politic bound to train up its members in the knowledge which will best fit them for the positions in life to which they may have

been born, or any others to which they may justly aspire through increased intelligence and personal worthiness. For multitudes among us have no right of access to any one of the more considerable and important of these libraries; and, except in rare instances, no library among us seeks to keep more than a single copy of any book on its shelves, so that no one of them, nor indeed, all of them taken together, can do even a tolerable amount of what ought to be done towards satisfying the demands for healthy, nourishing reading made by the great masses of our people, who cannot be expected to purchase such reading for themselves.

And yet there can be no doubt that such reading ought to be furnished to all, as a matter of public policy and duty, on the same principle that we furnish free education, and in fact, as a part, and a most important part, of the education of all. For it has been rightly judged that,—under political, social and religious institutions like ours,—it is of paramount importance that the means of general information should be so diffused that the largest possible number of persons should be induced to read and understand questions going down to the very foundations of social order, which are constantly presenting themselves, and which we, as a people, are constantly required to decide, and do decide, either ignorantly or wisely. That this *can* be done,—that is, that such libraries *can* be collected, and that they will be used to a much wider extent than libraries have ever been used before, and with much more important results, there can be no doubt; and if it can be done *anywhere*, it can be done *here* in Boston; for no population of one hundred and fifty thousand souls, lying so compactly together as to be able, with tolerable convenience, to resort to one library, was ever before so well fitted to become a reading, self-cultivating population, as the population of our own city is at this moment.

To accomplish this object, however,—which has never yet been attempted,—we must use means which have never before been used; otherwise the library we propose to establish, will not be adjusted to its especial purposes. Above all, while the rightful claims of no class,—however highly educated already,—should be overlooked, the first regard should be shown, as in the case of our Free Schools, to the wants of those, who can, in no other way supply themselves with the interesting and healthy reading necessary for their farther education. What precise plan should be adopted for such a library, it is not, perhaps, possible to settle beforehand. It is a new thing, a new step forward in general education; and we must feel our way as we advance. Still, certain points seem to rise up with so much prominence, that without deciding on any formal arrangement, until experience shall show what is practically useful—we may perhaps foresee that such a library as is contemplated would naturally fall into four classes, viz :

I. *Books that cannot be taken out of the Library*, such as Cyclopædias, Dictionaries, important public documents, and books, which, from their rarity or costliness, cannot be easily replaced. Perhaps others should be specifically added to this list, but after all, the Trustees would be sorry to exclude any book whatever so absolutely from circulation that, by permission of the highest authority having control of the library, it could not, in special cases, and with sufficient pledges for its safe and proper return, be taken out. For a book, it should be remembered, is never so much in the way of its duty as it is when it is in hand to be read or consulted.

II. *Books that few persons will wish to read*, and of which, therefore, only one copy will be kept, but which should be permitted to circulate freely, and if this copy should, contrary to expectation, be so often asked for, as

to be rarely on the shelves, another copy should then be bought,—or if needful, more than one other copy,—so as to keep one generally at home, especially if it be such a book as is often wanted for use there.

III. *Books that will be often asked for*, (we mean, the more respectable of the popular books of the time,) of which copies should be provided in such numbers, that *many* persons, if they desire it, can be reading the same work at the same moment, and so render the pleasant and healthy literature of the day accessible to the whole people at the only time they care for it,—that is, when it is living, fresh and new. Additional copies, therefore, of any book of this class should continue to be bought almost as long as they are urgently demanded, and thus, by following the popular taste,—unless it should ask for something unhealthy,—we may hope to create a real desire for general reading; and, by permitting the freest circulation of the books that is consistent with their safety, cultivate this desire among the young, and in the families and at the firesides of the greatest possible number of persons in the city.

An appetite like this, when formed, will, we fully believe, provide wisely and well for its own wants. The popular, current literature of the day can occupy but a small portion of the leisure even of the more laborious parts of our population, provided there should exist among them a love for reading as great, for instance, as the love for public lecturing, or for the public schools; and when such a taste for books has once been formed by these lighter publications, then the older and more settled works in Biography, in History, and in the graver departments of knowledge will be demanded. That such a taste can be excited by such means, is proved from the course taken in obedience to the dictates of their own interests, by the publishers of the popular literature of

the time during the last twenty or thirty years. The Harpers and others began chiefly with new novels and other books of little value. What they printed, however, was eagerly bought and read, because it was cheap and agreeable, if nothing else. A habit of reading was thus formed. Better books were soon demanded, and gradually the general taste has risen in its requisitions, until now the country abounds with respectable works of all sorts,—such as compose the three hundred volumes of the Harpers' School Library and the two hundred of their Family Library—which are read by great numbers of our people everywhere, especially in New England and in the Middle States. This taste, therefore, once excited will, we are persuaded, go on of itself from year to year, demanding better and better books, and, can as we believe, by a little judicious help in the selections for a Free City Library, rather than by any direct control, restraint, or solicitation, be carried much higher than has been commonly deemed possible; preventing at the same time, a great deal of the mischievous, poor reading now indulged in, which is bought and *paid* for, by offering good reading, *without pay*, which will be attractive.

Nor would the process by which this result is to be reached a costly one; certainly not costly compared with its benefits. Nearly all the most popular books are, from the circumstance of their popularity, cheap,—most of them very cheap,—because large editions of them are printed that are suited to the wants of those who cannot afford to buy dear books. It may, indeed, sometimes be necessary to purchase many copies of one of these books, and so the first outlay, in some cases, may seem considerable. But such a passion for any given book does not last long, and, as it subsides, the extra copies may be sold for something, until only a few are left in the library, or perhaps, only a single one, while the money re-

ceived from the sale of the rest,—which, at a reduced price, would, no doubt often be bought of the Librarian by those who had been most interested in reading them,—will serve to increase the general means for purchasing others of the same sort. The plan, therefore, it is believed, is a practicable one, so far as expense is concerned, and will, we think, be found on trial, much cheaper and much easier of execution than at the first suggestion, it may seem to be.

IV. The last class of books to be kept in such a library, consists, we suppose, of *periodical publications*, probably excluding newspapers, except such as may be given by their proprietors. Like the first class, they should not be taken out at all, or only in rare and peculiar cases, but they should be kept in a Reading Room accessible to everybody; open as many hours of the day as possible, and always in the evening; and in which all the books on the shelves of every part of the Library should be furnished for perusal or for consultation to all who may ask for them, except to such persons as may, from their disorderly conduct or unseemly condition, interfere with the occupations and comfort of others who may be in the room.

In the establishment of such a library, a beginning should be made, we think, without any sharply defined or settled plan, so as to be governed by circumstances as they may arise. The commencement should be made, of preference, in a very unpretending manner; erecting no new building and making no show; but spending such moneys as may be appropriated for the purpose, chiefly on books that are known to be really wanted, rather than on such as will make an imposing, a scientific or a learned collection; trusting, however, most confidently, that such a library, in the long run, will contain all that anybody can reasonably ask of it. For, to begin

by making it a really useful library; by awakening a general interest in it as a City Institution, important to the whole people, a part of their education, and an element of their happiness and prosperity, is the surest way to make it at last, a great and rich library for men of science, statesmen and scholars, as well as for the great body of the people, many of whom are always successfully struggling up to honorable distinctions and all of whom should be encouraged and helped to do it. Certainly this has proved to be the case with some of the best libraries yet formed in the United States, and especially with the Philadelphia Library, whose means were at first extremely humble and trifling, compared with those we can command at the outset. Such libraries have in fact enjoyed the public favor, and become large, learned, and scientific collections of books, exactly in proportion as they have been found generally useful.

As to the terms on which access should be had to a City Library, the Trustees can only say, that they would place no restrictions on its use, except such as the nature of individual books, or their safety may demand; regarding it as a great matter to carry as many of them as possible into the home of the young; into poor families; into cheap boarding houses; in short, wherever they will be most likely to affect life and raise personal character and condition. To many classes of persons the doors of such a library may, we conceive, be at once opened wide. All officers of the City Government, therefore, including the police, all clergymen settled among us, all city missionaries, all teachers of our public schools, all members of normal schools, all young persons who may have received medals or other honorary distinctions on leaving our Grammar and higher schools, and, in fact, as many classes, as can safely be entrusted with it *as classes*, might enjoy, on the mere names and personal

responsibility of the individuals composing them, the right of taking out freely all books that are permitted to circulate, receiving one volume at a time. To all other persons,—women as well as men—living in the City, the same privilege might be granted on depositing the value of the volume or of the set to which it may belong; believing that the pledge of a single dollar or even less, may thus insure pleasant and profitable reading to any family among us.

In this way the Trustees would endeavor to make the Public Library of the City, as far as possible, the crowning glory of our system of City Schools; or in other words, they would make it an institution, fitted to continue and increase the best effects of that system, by opening to all the means of self culture through books, for which these schools have been specially qualifying them.

Such are the views entertained by the Trustees, with reference to the objects to be attained by the foundation of a public library and the mode of effecting them.

It remains to be considered briefly what steps should be adopted toward the accomplishment of such a design.

If it were probable that the City Council would deem it expedient at once to make a large appropriation for the erection of a building and the purchase of an ample library, and that the citizens at large would approve such an expenditure, the Trustees would of course feel great satisfaction in the prompt achievement of an object of such high public utility. But in the present state of the finances of the city, and in reference to an object on which the public mind is not yet enlightened by experience, the Trustees regard any such appropriation and expenditure as entirely out of the question. They conceive even that there are advantages in a more gradual course of measures. They look, therefore, only to the

continuance of such moderate and frugal expenditure, on the part of the city, as has been already authorized and commenced, for the purchase of books and the compensation of the librarian; and for the assignment of a room or rooms in some one of the public buildings belonging to the city for the reception of the books already on hand, or which the Trustees have the means of procuring. With aid to this extent on the part of the city, the Trustees believe that all else may be left to the public spirit and liberality of individuals. They are inclined to think that, from time to time, considerable collections of books will be presented to the library by citizens of Boston, who will take pleasure in requiting in this way the advantages which they have received from its public institutions, or who for any other reason are desirous of increasing the means of public improvement. Besides the collections of magnitude and value, which can hardly fail in the lapse of years to be received in this way, it may with equal confidence be expected, that constant accessions will be made to the public library by the donation of single volumes or of small numbers of books, which, however inconsiderable in the single case, become in the course of time, an important source of increase to all public libraries. A free city library, being an object of interest to the entire population, would in this respect have an advantage over institutions which belong to private corporations. Authors and editors belonging to Boston would generally deem it a privilege to place a copy of their works on the shelves of a public library; and the liberal publishers of the city, to whose intelligence and enterprise the cause of literature and science has at all times owed so much, would unquestionably show themselves efficient friends and benefactors.

In fact, we know of no undertaking more likely, when once brought into promising operation, to enlist in its

favor the whole strength of that feeling, which, in so eminent a degree, binds the citizens of Boston to the place of their birth or adoption. In particular the Trustees are disposed to think that there is not a parent in easy circumstances who has had a boy or a girl educated at a public school, nor an individual who has himself enjoyed that privilege, who will not regard it at once as a duty and a pleasure to do something, in this way, to render more complete the provision for public education.

In order to put the library into operation with the least possible delay, the Trustees would propose to the city government to appropriate for this purpose the ground floor of the Adams school house in Mason street. They are led to believe that it will not be needed for the use of the Normal School proposed to be established in this building. It may be made, at a small expense, to afford ample accommodation for four or five thousand volumes, with an adjoining room for reading and consulting books, and it will admit of easy enlargement to twice its present dimensions. Such an apartment would enable the Trustees at once to open the library with five thousand volumes, a collection of sufficient magnitude to afford a fair specimen of the benefits of such an establishment to the city.

Should it win the public favor, as the Trustees cannot but anticipate, it will soon reach a size, which will require enlarged premises. These, as we have said, can be easily provided by the extension of the present room on the ground floor; and it will be time enough, when the space at command is filled up, to consider what further provision need be made for the accommodation of the library. Should the expectation of the Trustees be realized, and should it be found to supply an existing defect

in our otherwise admirable system of public education, its future condition may be safely left to the judicious liberality of the city government and the public spirit of the community.

BENJAMIN SEAVER,
SAMPSON REED,
LYMAN PERRY,
JAMES LAWRENCE,
EDWARD S. ERVING,
JAMES B. ALLEN,
GEORGE W. WARREN,
GEORGE WILSON,
EDWARD EVERETT,
GEORGE TICKNOR,
JOHN P. BIGELOW,
NATHANIEL B. SHURTLEFF,
THOMAS G. APPLETON.

Boston, July 6, 1852.

BOSTON, July 26, 1852.

At a meeting of the Trustees of the Public Library held on the 6th instant, the foregoing Report was submitted by a Subcommittee previously appointed for that purpose, consisting of EDWARD EVERETT, GEORGE TICKNOR, SAMPSON REED, and NATHANIEL B. SHURTLEFF, and was unanimously accepted and ordered to be printed.

GEORGE WILSON, *Secretary.*

